

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 L-03 CIAE-00 DODE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00

PA-01 USIA-06 PRS-01 SP-02 PM-04 NSC-05 SS-15 /057 W

----- 060102

R 091640Z AUG 76

FM AMEMBASSY BERLIN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3013

INFO AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY ROME

USMISSION USBERLIN UNN

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E O 11652: NA

TAGS: PFOR, GE, GW, IT

SUBJ: ITALIAN EMBASSY IN EAST BERLIN ATTEMPTS TO ASSESS
KILLING OF ITALIAN AT GDR BORDER

REFS: A) STATE 195322; B) BONN 13243

1. IN THE DEARTH OF OFFICIAL INFORMATION ABOUT THE FATAL SHOOTING OF AN ITALIAN TRUCK DRIVER THE MORING OF AUGUST 5 AT THE HIRSCHBERG BORDER CROSSING INTO THE FRG, AN EMB OFF CONTACTED THE ITALIAN EMBASSY IN EAST BERLIN ABOUT THIS EVENT. ACCORDING TO ITALIAN EMBASSY SOURCES THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE SHOOTING STILL REMAIN UNCLEAR AND THEIR ATTEMPTS TO OBTAIN "THE STRAIGHT STORY" FROM OFFICIALS IN THE GDR FOREIGN MINISTRY HAVE NOT BEEN SUCCESSFUL. THE ITALIAN CHARGE' PROTESTED ON THE DAY OF THE INCIDENT AUGUST 5 AND AGAIN ON AUGUST 6 ABOUT THE LACK OF INFORMATION BEING PROVIDED BY OFFICIAL GDR SOURCES. IN GENERAL THE ITALIANS BELIEVE THAT THEY HAVE NOT RECEIVED ANYWHERE NEAR A FULL ACCOUNT OF EVENTS.

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MOREOVER SOME OF THE INFORMATION THEY RECEIVED EARLY

HAS NOW BEEN CONCLUDED TO BE ERRONEOUS.

2. ITALIAN AMBASSADOR DELL'ELMO RETURNED FROM LEAVE IN ITALY ON AUGUST 7 TO TAKE CHARGE OF REPRESENTATIONS TO THE GDR FOREIGN MINISTRY. THE BODY OF THE SLAIN ITALIAN WAS FLOWN BACK TO ITALY ON AUGUST 8. THE EMBASSY IS NOW AWAITING THE RESULTS OF AN AUTOPSY TO DETERMINE WHAT FURTHER STEPS SHOULD BE TAKEN WITH GDR AUTHORITIES.

3. EAST GERMAN COVERAGE OF THE EVENT HAS BEEN MINIMAL AND HAS MERELY NOTED THAT AN ITALIAN TRUCK DRIVER WAS SHOT DEAD IN ATTEMPTING TO ENTER THE GDR FROM THE FRG AT HIRSCHBERG. THERE HAVE BEEN NO OTHER PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENTS OR EXPLANATIONS OF THIS TRAGEDY. AN EDITORIAL IN NEUES DEUTSCHLAND ON AUGUST 9, HOWEVER, REPORTS THAT THE HANDLING OF THIS LATEST INCIDENT BY WEST GERMAN POLITICIANS AND REPORTERS IS HELPING TO EXACERBATE GDR/FRG RELATIONS (SEE SEPTTEL).

4. COMMENT: IT APPEARS CLEAR THAT THE ITALIAN EMBASSY MAY NEVER KNOW THE EXACT REASONS WHY A GDR GUARD KILLED THE ITALIAN DRIVER AT HIRSCHBERG. THEY ARE INCLINED AT THIS STAGE TO ACCEPT THE VERSIONS APPEARING IN THE WESTERN PRESS UNTIL AND UNLESS CLARIFIED BY GDR AUTHORITIES. THEY ARE ALSO UNDER THE IMPRESSION THAT THE ITALIAN TRUCK DRIVER MAY HAVE BEEN A VICTIM OF THE "SCHUSSBEFEHL" GIVEN TO GDR BORDER GUARDS AND EMPHASIZED TO THEM BY HIGH GDR AUTHORITIES AFTER THE SEVERAL OTHER RECENT INCIDENTS OF "BORDER VIOLATION" BY FRG CITIZENS.COOPER

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: MURDER, BORDER INCIDENTS, DEATHS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 09 AUG 1976
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: coburnhl
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976BERLIN06432
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760306-0638
From: BERLIN
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t19760874/aaaacmtd.tel
Line Count: 90
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 76 STATE 195322, 76 BONN 13243
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: coburnhl
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 07 APR 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <07 APR 2004 by BoyleJA>; APPROVED <05 AUG 2004 by coburnhl>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: ITALIAN EMBASSY IN EAST BERLIN ATTEMPTS TO ASSESS KILLING OF ITALIAN AT GDR BORDER
TAGS: PFOR, GC, GE, IT, (CORGI, BENITO)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006